

Message Text

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51

ACTION NEA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-03 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 RSC-01 PRS-01

CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 DODE-00 /044 W
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R 051651Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0000
INFO AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

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E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, LE, SA
SUBJECT: LEBANESE-SAUDI RELATIONS

1. SUMMARY: THE SAUDI-LEBANESE RELATIONS APPEAR TO BE GOING THROUGH ANOTHER CRISIS DUE TO LEBANESE ALLEGATIONS RE KING FEISAL'S NIGGARDLINESS. END SUMMARY.

2. WE HAVE NOTED INDICATIONS OF SAUDI UNHAPPINESS RE LEBANESE PRESS TREATMENT OF KING FEISAL AND SAUDI GOVERNMENT. SAUDI AMB AL-RUMIAH HAS BEEN RECALLED TO JIDDA AND HAS LET IT BE KNOWN THAT HE PROBABLY WILL NOT BE RETURNING TO BEIRUT. AS IT WAS NOT CLEAR TO US SPECIFICALLY AS TO WHAT ARTICLES SAUDIS OBJECTED TO, I ASKED GHASSAN TUENI TODAY, FEB 5, PRECISELY WHAT WAS BEHIND THE SAUDI PIQUE.

3. TUENI SAID SITUATION WAS MUCH MORE SERIOUS THAN JUST A PIQUE. ACCORDING TO HIM SOME ARTICLES HAD APPEARED IN SMALL BEIRUT PAPERS, REFERRING IN A DISPARAGING MANNER TO FEISAL'S LACK OF GENEROSITY TOWARD ARAB NATIONS THAT HAD FOUGHT IN THE OCTOBER WAR. OTHER BEIRUT PAPERS, INCLUDING AN NAHAR, HAVE CARRIED STORIES QUOTING SYRIANS TO THE EFFECT THAT WHILE SYRIA PAID IN BLOOD THE OCTOBER WAR, THE SAUDIS WERE NIGGARDLY IN THEIR FIN-

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ANCIAL SUPPORT AND ENDED THE OCTOBER WAR WITH OVERFLOWING CASH

BOXES. ACCORDING TO TUENI, THERE ARE IN FACT AT LEAST THREE SAUDI AMBASSADORS IN BEIRUT. THE FIRST, OBVIOUSLY, IS AL-RUMIAH. THE SECOND IS HIS MILITARY ATTACHE, GENERAL ALI AL-CHA'ER AND THE THIRD IS THE COMMERCIAL ATTACHE, WHOSE NAME I DID NOT CATCH. THERE THREE MEN DO NOT SPEAK TO EACH OTHER AND TUENI STATED THAT EACH OF THEM ARE RUNNING THEIR OWN INFORMATION PROGRAMS HERE, SUBSIDIZING BUT NOT TOO GENEROUSLY, VARIOUS AND SUNDY NEWSPAPERS, WEEKLIES, ETC. EACH HAS HIS OWN CHANNEL BACK TO JIDDA AND EACH BAD-MOUTHS THE OTHERS. THE AMBASSADOR APPARENTLY GOT THE WORST OF THIS FRACAS AND, ACCORDING TO TUENI, HAS BEEN RECALLED IN DISGRACE TO JIDDA.

4. THE FOREGOING FRACAS, ACCORDING TO TUENI, COULD, HOWEVER, BE SERIOUS, IN THAT THE SAUDIS ARE REPORTED TO BE LIVID AND HAVE GONE SO FAR AS TO THREATEN TO EXPELL LEABANESE WORKING IN SAUDI ARABIA AND CANCEL A LEBANESE TRADE FAIR THAT WAS TO BE HELD IN JIDDA IN ABOUT THREE OR FOUR MONTHS. ANOTHER ELEMENT IS THAT PRESIDENT FRANGIE IS ALSO PERSONALLY INVOLVED. HE IS SUPPOSED TO HAVE HAD WORDS WITH OMAR SAQQAF IN NEW YORK THE DAY BEFORE SAQQAF'S DEATH, WHEN SAQQAF ALLEGEDLY INSISTED HE SPEAK IN ARABIC AND AS SPOKESMAN OF THE ARAB LEADERS INTRODUCE ARAFAT TO THE UN. FRANGIE, ACCORDING TO TUENI, TOOK UMBRAGE AT SAQQAF'S SUGGESTIONS AND SINCE HIS RETURN TO BEIRUT HAS NOT HESITATED TO SPEAK IN A DEROGATORY MANNER OF FEISAL'S NIGGARDLINESS IN SHARING HIS NEWLY VAST WEALTH WITH OTHER ARAB STATES. (A FEW WEEKS AGO PRESIDENTIAL ADVISER BOUTROS DIB MADE SUCH REMARKS TO ME BUT I DID NOT TAKE THEM SERIOUSLY. IN RETROSPECT, HOWEVER, IT IS OBVIOUS HE WAS REFLECTING FRANGIE'S VIEWS.)

5. FOREGOING MAY BE TEMPEST IN TEAPOT, BUT ON EVE OF CAIRO DEFENSE MINISTERS MEETING IT COULD WELL BE A COMPLICATING FACTOR AND MIGHT BE INTERESTING BACKGROUND AGAINST WHICH TO VIEW WHATEVER WE LEARN ABOUT CAIRO MEETING.

GODLEY

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